



The GSChronicles

February 2009

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Announcements

▪ GSC Meeting:

The next GSC meeting will be held on Monday, **March 2nd at 4PM in Bldg 50 Rm 1227**. The room and time change allow us to video conference with students at both RML and Baltimore. The normal refreshments will still be provided. Students in **Baltimore** can participate by going to the 5th floor conference room of the BRC. For **RML** students, the videoconference will be: RML Bldg 11 conference room (at **2PM MST**).

▪ Updated GSC Constitution:

The Graduate Student Council Constitution has been updated. Please check out the new version: <http://gpp.nih.gov/Current/GraduateStudentCouncil/GSCCommittees/GSCConstitutionDraft.htm>

▪ March Campus Triad Lunch:

NIH graduate students meet monthly for lunch at various cafeterias across the NIH campus. The next Triad Lunch for those on NIH main campus will be on Wed. **March 4th at 12 noon** in the Bldg 1, Bldg 10/B1, and Bldg 35 cafeterias. Please join your Campus Area mailing list at <http://gpp.nih.gov/Current/GraduateStudentCouncil/GSCListSers/>.

▪ GSX Listserv:

The Graduate Student Exchange (GSX) is a social listserv for grad students at NIH. Postings for roommates, items for sale, and social outings are

common. It's a great way to connect to the group of grad students. To join the group, visit <http://gpp.nih.gov/Current/GraduateStudentCouncil/GSCListSers/>.

▪ GSC Social Events:

Ice Skating at the National Mall

Dust off your twinklin' toes and come on down to the National Mall on **March 4th** for some ice skating action! Zip back and forth among the museums and scenery of the National Gallery of Art Sculpture Garden skating rink. Meet at the Sculpture Garden at 6PM; bring your student ID for \$6.00 admission and \$3.00 skate rental. The Sculpture Garden is located on the National Mall at 7th Street and Constitution Avenue NW. Contact mcbriiden@niaid.nih.gov with questions.

▪ Community Service:

Saturday April 18: Relay for Life

Join the team of NIH Graduate Students that will be spending the day (and night!) at the 2009 American Cancer Society Relay for Life at GWU. If you can't walk with us, help us to raise \$500. Check out the team website at: http://main.acsevents.org/site/TR/RelayForLife/RFLFY09SA?team_id=362801&pg=team&fr_id=12639&et=0Zto5wkKQTP_x_hamCNGQ_&s_tafid=243467. To find out more, contact Matt Berberich, Team Leader, at mjberberich@yahoo.com.

▪ GS3:

The **Graduate Student Seminar Series (GS3)** is a monthly meeting where students present their work to fellow graduate students. The GS3 Committee is now scheduling speakers for our Graduate Student Seminar Series for the remainder of the 2009. Just fill out the GS3 Entry Form at <http://gpp.nih.gov/NR/rdonlyres/708995E6-CDCA-4815-A9B7-35C1E4EB3635/19101/GS3entryform.doc> and submit it to GSCgs3@od.nih.gov in order to be considered for this unique seminar series! The next meeting will be **March 19th at 1PM** in Bldg 50 Rm 1227; light refreshments will be provided. The speakers, Nicole McNeil and Sandra Chapman, will focus on cancer research.

▪ BSBIG:

The Biophysics and Structural Biology Graduate Student Interest Group has been meeting bimonthly. The first meeting of the month focuses on learning a new laboratory technique,

whereas the second meeting of the month is used to discuss a paper that uses the technique. If you are interested in attending or have any questions, contact GSCstructbiol@od.nih.gov.

▪ **SNIG:**

The **Systems Neuroscience Interest Group for Graduate Students** is a group of students interested in systems/ cognitive/ clinical neuroscience. On **Thursday, March 5th**, Matt Berberich (NYU) will present his recent work entitled "Isolation and characterization of ErbB4 receptor-containing protein complexes by AP-MS." The meeting will be held at **4pm** in the graduate student lounge (Bldg 10, Room 6S235A) and everyone is welcome to attend. To learn more about SNIG, please visit:

<http://gpp.nih.gov/Current/GraduateStudentCouncil/GSCCommittees/Academic.htm#SNIG>. If you are interested in joining SNIG or have questions, please email GSCsnig@od.nih.gov.

▪ **Thesis Committee:**

Graduate students present their dissertation research to the NIH Community. This thesis seminar is an opportunity to celebrate with colleagues who contributed to the graduate student's achievement and to introduce the student and his/her work to other scientists with similar research interests. Please contact GSCthesis@od.nih.gov if you would like to schedule a defense at NIH.

Happy Birthday to: Phil Wang (Feb 7th), Lei Qin (Feb 8th), Mohammed Zulfiquer Hossain (Feb 16th), Natalia Wesolowska (Feb 23rd), Anastasia Wise (Feb 25th), and Loren Hansen (Feb 28th).

Upcoming Birthdays: Brett Spurrier (Mar 2nd), Tyler Aid (Mar 2nd), Rayna Carter (Mar 5th), Marieke Mur (Mar 18th), Sandra Dunn (Mar 19th), Sandra Dillahunt (Mar 31st).

Please **send your publications, awards, graduation, and birthday announcements** to GSChronicles@od.nih.gov for recognition.

Congratulations to Tom Johnson!

Tom Johnson and Keith Martin, his supervisor at University of Cambridge were awarded the NC3Rs prize for a paper they published earlier this year describing a novel retinal explant culture system that can be used to study stem cell therapy in retinal disease. The NC3Rs wrote up a press release describing the award and their work: <http://www.nc3rs.org.uk/news.asp?id=1010>.

State of the GSC: 2009

Kim Baxter and Kate Callahan
GSC 2009 Co-chairs

Please consider this a call for your help and participation in GSC seminars and events in 2009! The Graduate Student Council is in the midst of a transformation as we strive to solidify our graduate student community at the NIH. But success requires your involvement and support.

Building a graduate student community on and off the NIH campus will provide friendship and support for all of us. Fostering a strong sense of identity within that community will help us assert the role of graduate students at the NIH.

Forging this community requires the participation of all graduate students. We will work hard to ensure that events are not a waste of your time. We ask that you find thirty minutes here or an hour there to attend a workshop, lunch, or networking event. These events will supplement and enrich your graduate education, provide support to your colleagues, and may even be altogether enjoyable.

Often GPP students say "the NIH is not like a normal graduate school," usually followed by a complaint about something we're lacking or some bureaucratic required paperwork. We want to point out that there's a lot to appreciate in *not* being "a normal graduate school." Our unique graduate student community has monthly career seminars with a large variety of jobs represented, plus an active community service organization, plus the opportunity to get to know more than 300 students from 120 institutions and 30 countries, and the prospect of presenting your thesis work to an audience of top research scientists from many different fields.

Each of us chose this unique setting in which to pursue independent research – a little bit of work and participation can make it a program that institutions around the country will view as a new paradigm of student-driven academic community!

We look forward to getting to know and working with you in 2009.

To learn more about the easy ways to help build your community through events sponsored by the GSC, please visit: <http://gpp.nih.gov/Current/GraduateStudentCouncil/GSCCommittees/>

Kim Baxter and Kate Callahan
GSC Co-Chairs, 2009

Graduate Student Spotlight



Tom Johnson

Tom Johnson is the GSC Secretary for 2009. He grew up in Lake Zurich, IL, a suburban town about 40 miles northwest of Chicago that he describes as a pretty average Midwestern town. In the summers he enjoyed hanging out at the lake, which he admits to actually being more of a large pond.

Tom went to Northwestern University and majored in Biological Sciences, with a concentration in neurobiology and a minor in chemistry. During his junior and senior years he worked on a research project in a neurobiology/endocrinology lab involving the mechanism of hot flashes induced by estrogen deprivation. He also spent two summers doing clinical ophthalmology research at NU and the University of Nebraska, where he investigated different aspects of glaucoma.

Science and medicine interested him from a very young age. His dad is a veterinarian and he used to spend time with him in the animal hospital on Saturdays. Tom would see “patients” with him, look through the microscope as lab tests were run, and watch him perform surgery. Later, he became interested in clinical medicine and decided he wanted to become a doctor. It wasn’t until his research experiences as an undergrad that he became interested in ophthalmology.

After 2 years of research with Dr. Keith Martin in the Department of Clinical Neurosciences at the University of Cambridge, Tom came to the NIH in October, and is currently in his 3rd year. He currently works with Dr. Stanislav Tomarev in the Molecular Mechanisms of Glaucoma Section,

Laboratory of Molecular and Developmental Biology at the National Eye Institute. His work involves assessing and improving the efficacy of stem cell therapy for retinal neurodegenerative disease. After he finishes his PhD, Tom will start his MD at Johns Hopkins University.

Outside of lab, Tom both participates in and enjoys watching sports. He has a black belt in Shotokan karate and was captain of the Cambridge Varsity Karate Squad for a year. In 2007, Tom and two other members of the squad were selected to represent the British Team in the European University Sports Association championships in Podgorica, Montenegro, where they placed third. He is also such a big fan of the Chicago Bears and White Sox that while in Cambridge, he had his dad record every Bears game on DVD and mail them to him.

Tom enjoys movies such as *American Beauty*, *Platoon* and *Pulp Fiction*, and books like *Walden*, *Freakonomics*, and *Outliers*. Back home in Chicago, he has an English Mastiff named Murdoch who gets excited if he hears the names of his favorite foods: pizza, ice cream, and McDonald’s cheeseburgers, much to the annoyance of his veterinarian dad!

Tom recalls a funny situation that happened to him after 2 months of living in England. He and his girlfriend were trying to find the tube (what we would call a subway in the US). They followed a sign reading “subway” down a set of stairs, through a dark corridor, up another set of stairs, and arrived at street level on the other side of the road. Retracing their steps didn’t help, and they eventually had to find another tube entrance to get back home. It wasn’t until a day later that they realized in England, “subway” meant an underground walkway for pedestrians to get across busy streets. What they were really looking for was the “Underground.”

From a great little essay that is sure to brighten the mood of any graduate student, Tom offers this following quote: “One of the beautiful things about science is that it allows us to bumble along, getting it wrong time after time, and feel perfectly fine as long as we learn something each time... The more comfortable we become with being stupid, the deeper we will wade into the unknown and the more likely we are to make big discoveries.” Martin J. Schwartz, “The importance of stupidity in scientific research”. J Cell Sci. 2008; 121: 1771.

GSC Meeting Overview: 02/02/09

- March GSC meeting place/time may change, look for announcement.
- Will consider applying to FAES & GPP for funding. May fundraise if allowed.
- GPP Notes: Post-doc panel on March 17th, Natcher from 2:30-5pm.
- GPP interviews happening this month. Your partnership rep has more information.
- Looking for GSC members to be contacts for their Institute; some Institutes are not yet represented. Contact Kim Baxter if interested.
- Plans to make GS³ seminar series more formalized, have question/answer sessions, allow a bigger audience, scheduled in advance, organized by research area with targeted advertising.
- Retreat issues: Search for grad students on Yahoo GSX site (under Database). Look for GSC roles in Constitution if you're unclear. GSC funding in 2009 for events such as grad-only holiday party, summer BBQ, discussed.
- Social Committee: may have 1 happy hour, bowling next month at NNMC, Felcom happy hour Feb 12th, possible events like ice skating, White House Tour discussed.
- Career Development: Pathways Project Management Seminar on Feb 18th, 2-4pm, with lunch at 1pm.
- GS³: Next meeting Feb 19th, 1 pm. May start mock poster sessions in spring.
- Community Service: Manna box-packing Feb 3rd; Blood drive: Feb 11th; Relay for Life April 18th, upcoming Youth Enrichment Program of Transitional Housing Corp (THC), see Community Service page of GSC site for more info.
- Trainee Advisory Committee: Ideas for TAC webpage presented.
- Public Relations Committee: Updating GSC committee pages and adding "student publications section" on website discussed.
- Symposium Committee: Suggestions for keynote speaker made (Nancy Wexler, Andrew Fire, Steven Chu, Tom Daschle.) Looking for new committee members to help plan symposium, contact Dan Crooks if interested.
- Thesis Committee: met with GPP administration for list of 10 things to do for thesis talk.
- Discussion about subsidizing childcare for IRTA fellows.
- Photos taken for committees and partnership reps.
- Orientation to GSC given.

Graduate Student Entertainment

In honor of Charles Darwin's 200th birthday, enjoy some enlightening films portraying evolution through the eyes of...

The Simpsons:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faRIFsYmkeY>

The Daily Show:

<http://www.thedailyshow.com/video/index.jhtml?videoId=124094&title=Evolution's-Evolution>

The BBC:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6lrUUDboZo>

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